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City Hall's "green roof" delivers environmental and cost-saving benefits

Nine varieties of sedum plants are part of a "green roof" installation that will reduce energy costs year round for the office areas located in the lower and basement levels of our Dufferin Avenue building. At 250 square metres, the City's green roof is believed to be the largest of its kind at a Canadian city hall.

As Tim Wellhauser, Manager, Facilities Design & Construction, explains: "These low-growing perennials - also known as stonecrop - are a drought-resistant ground cover that help to counteract the urban heat effect of paved and tarred surfaces. Additionally, the sedum plants and their growing medium can reduce indoor temperatures by up to 6 to 8 degrees during warm/hot weather which can cut seasonal air conditioning costs."

Completed today, the new green roof system at City Hall will also reduce runoff by absorbing rain water and provide other advantages such as noise reduction and the improvement of air quality through the absorption of carbon dioxide and trapping of air-borne dust and dirt.

"It's great to have initiatives like this to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels," says Sean Russell who leads the City's corporate energy management program.

The green environmental and cost benefits of the new installation include the fact that the roof has a greater longevity factor. A living sedum roof is expected to last at least twice as long as a conventional roof. "We're achieving savings not only in normal heating and cooling costs but also replacement expenses," notes Russell. "It's a win/win situation from every perspective."

Retrofits to improve efficiency in City of London municipal buildings have been ongoing since the early 1990s. Some recent - and impressive - savings are related to the replacement of incandescent bulbs. The conversion of City traffic signals to high efficiency LED lights reduced energy costs by 80 to 85 per cent. And, in partnership with London Hydro, 11,000 energy efficient light bulbs were installed in London and Middlesex Housing Corporation properties. This initiative, launched in conjunction with the August Blackout Day, will save $400,000 and cut more than 1,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions over the life of the bulbs.